Jean Batten

Jean Batten was the daughter of a dental surgeon and a mother who became a strong supporter of her career as a pilot. In 1924 she was enrolled into a girls' boarding college in [Remuera](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Remuera) in [Auckland](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Auckland) where she studied ballet and piano. Though she was a gifted pianist, at the age of 18 she wanted to become a pilot, inspired by the Australian [Charles Kingsford Smith](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Kingsford_Smith), who took her for a flight in his [Southern Cross](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Southern_Cross_(aircraft)). In 1929 she moved to England with her mother to join the London Aeroplane Club. She took her first solo flight in 1930 and gained private and commercial licences by 1932, borrowing £500 from Fred Truman, a New Zealand pilot serving in the Royal Air Force, to fund the 100 hours flying time required. She left Truman and turned to Victor Dorée, who borrowed £400 from his mother to buy Batten a [Gipsy Moth](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/De_Havilland_DH.60_Moth) biplane.

Batten made two unsuccessful attempts to beat [Amy Johnson](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amy_Johnson)'s time to Australia. In April 1933 she hit two sandstorms before the engine failed, and wrecked the aircraft crash-landing near [Karachi](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karachi). Returning to London she could not persuade Dorée to buy her another aircraft, so she turned to the Castrol oil company, who bought her a second-hand Gipsy Moth for £240. She made another attempt in April 1934, but ran out of fuel at night on the outskirts of Rome. Flying into a maze of radio masts, she crash landed and nearly severed her lip. The plane was repaired and she flew it back to London, where she borrowed the lower wings from the aircraft of her fiancé, stockbroker Edward Walter, for a third attempt.[[1]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jean_Batten#cite_note-DNZB-0)

In May 1934, Batten successfully flew solo from England to Australia in the Gipsy Moth. Her trip of 14 days and 22 hours beat the existing England-to-Australia record of English aviatrix Amy Johnson by over four days.[[1]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jean_Batten#cite_note-DNZB-0) For this achievement and for subsequent record-breaking flights, she was awarded the [Harmon Trophy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harmon_Trophy) three times from 1935 to 1937. She also received an endorsement contract with [Castrol](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Castrol) oil. Batten's book about her trip, *Solo Flight*, was published by Jackson and O'Sullivan Ltd in 1934. Batten took a boat to New Zealand with the Gipsy Moth (which could not have flown across the [Tasman Sea](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tasman_Sea)) and made a six-week aerial tour there before returning to England.

[](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Percival_P.3_Gull_Six_G-ADPR_Baginton_19.06.54_edited-2.jpg)

[http://bits.wikimedia.org/static-1.21wmf2/skins/common/images/magnify-clip.png](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Percival_P.3_Gull_Six_G-ADPR_Baginton_19.06.54_edited-2.jpg)

Batten's record-breaking Percival Gull Six named *Jean* on its engine cowling at a 1954 UK air show

After her first Australia flight Batten bought a [Percival Gull Six](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Percival_Gull) monoplane, *G-ADPR*, which was named *Jean*. In 1935 she set a world record flying from England to [Brazil](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brazil) in the Gull, for which she was presented the [Order of the Southern Cross](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Order_of_the_Southern_Cross), the first person other than Royalty to be so honoured.[[2]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jean_Batten#cite_note-1) In 1936 she set another world record with a solo flight from England to New Zealand. At her birthplace of Rotorua she was honored by local Māori, as she had been after the 1934 journey. She was given a chief’s feather cloak and given the title Hine-o-te-Rangi – "Daughter of the Skies". Batten was created [Commander of the British Empire](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Order_of_the_British_Empire) (CBE) in 1936, and she was also given the Cross of Chevalier of the French [Legion of Honour](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/L%C3%A9gion_d%27honneur) that year. Also in 1936, for the second successive year, Batten was again awarded the [Royal Aero Club](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal_Aero_Club)'s [Britannia Trophy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Britannia_Trophy) for most meritorious performance in aviation during the previous year.

In 1938, she was the first woman to be awarded the medal of the [Fédération Aéronautique Internationale](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/F%C3%A9d%C3%A9ration_A%C3%A9ronautique_Internationale), aviation's highest honour. Throughout the 1930s she was very social and made many friends with other aviators internationally, as she described in her autobiography.

By sammie tanira

[](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Jean_Batten's_Percival_Gull.jpg)[World War II](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_II) ended Batten's flying adventures. Her Gull was commissioned to active service but Batten was not permitted to fly it. During the war she was involved in campaigns giving lectures in England to raise money for guns and aeroplanes, but her flying days were over. After the war she retired from public life except for a few anniversary appearances.[[3]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jean_Batten#cite_note-2)

Batten became a recluse and lived in several places around the world with her mother until her mother's death in 1965. In 1977 she was guest of honour at the opening of the Aviation Pioneers Pavilion at Auckland's Museum of Transport and Technology, after which she returned to her home in Spain.[[4]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jean_Batten#cite_note-3) In 1982 she was bitten by a dog on the island of [Majorca](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Majorca). She refused treatment and the wound became infected.[[5]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jean_Batten#cite_note-4) She died alone in a hotel on Majorca, from complications from the dog bite.

Batten's autobiography, *My Life*, was published by George G. Harrap & Co. Ltd. in 1938 and is now available in full online at the New Zealand Electronic Text Center, part of the [Victoria University of Wellington](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Victoria_University_of_Wellington) Library. An extended version was printed under the title *Alone in the Sky* by N.Z. Technical books in 1979.

Because of her striking looks, her glamorous appearance at receptions (she always took a dress with her on her record-breaking flights), and her later reclusive ways, Batten became known as the "[Greta Garbo](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greta_Garbo) of the skies". In October 2008 a musical *Garbo of the Skies* written by [Paul Andersen-Gardiner](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Paul_Andersen-Gardiner&action=edit&redlink=1) and Rebekah Hornblow had its inaugural performance in [Opunake](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Opunake) by the Opunake Players at the Lakeside Playhouse. This was based on Ian Mackersey's biography.

**[**[**edit**](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Jean_Batten&action=edit&section=2)**] Legacy**

[http://bits.wikimedia.org/static-1.21wmf2/skins/common/images/magnify-clip.png](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Jean_Batten's_Percival_Gull.jpg)

[](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:BattenAucklandAirport2010.JPG)Batten's Percival Gull on display at the Jean Batten Terminal at [Auckland Airport](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Auckland_Airport).

[http://bits.wikimedia.org/static-1.21wmf2/skins/common/images/magnify-clip.png](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:BattenAucklandAirport2010.JPG)

Statue of Batten at Auckland Airport

[Houses](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/House_system) in [Macleans College](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Macleans_College), [Howick Intermediate](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Howick_Intermediate) and [Westlake Girls High School](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Westlake_Girls_High_School) are named after her, as is Batten (Blue) House at [Orewa College](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orewa_College) and in the whanau system of [Aorere College](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aorere_College) in South Auckland. A primary school in [Mangere](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mangere) is named after her as are streets in [Auckland](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Auckland), [Christchurch](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christchurch), [Mount Maunganui](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mount_Maunganui), [Wellington](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wellington), [Wallington](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wallington,_London) and in her birthplace of [Rotorua](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rotorua). The historic Jean Batten building on the corner of Fort and Shortland streets in Auckland has been incorporated into the new [Bank of New Zealand](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bank_of_New_Zealand) head office building, and the [Auckland Airport](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Auckland_Airport) International Terminal is named after her. The Percival Gull G-ADPR in which she made the first ever solo trip from England to New Zealand in 1936 and many other record-breaking trips now hangs in the Jean Batten International Terminal.

A bronze sculpture of Batten is located in the main terminal of [Rotorua Airport](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rotorua_Regional_Airport) and a small park in the middle of the city is also named after her.

In September 2009, a [Qantas](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Qantas) [737-800](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boeing_737), the first International configuration plane of its type and Qantas's 75th 737 was named after Batten.[[6]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jean_Batten#cite_note-5)

During the 1980's Britannia operated 737-200 G-BGYL, named Jean Batten. It later crashed in Panama after being sold to COPA